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## *Galatea*

Kelly Searsmith

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## Mythcon 51: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

Albuquerque, New Mexico • Postponed to: July 30 – August 2, 2021



### Additional Keywords

Poetry; Galatea; Kelly Sears Smith

## ***THE WITCHING OF WELLMAN DAIRY***

**Kelly Sears Smith**

it as if I were trapped in a burning house, the room filling with smoke. This wasn't how it was supposed to happen; I hadn't counted on her suffering like that, her mouth working, like she was calling out to me to save her. I wanted to save her, found myself staggering forward toward the fire, and her, skin blackening, already on the ground, twitching. How could I save her from what I had done? Even as I moved forward, with no water anywhere to douse the flames, I held the scythe out in case she made a last grab for me. Still a safe way off, I stopped, but I couldn't stop looking, couldn't stop mumbling, "Witches can't cross fire, no matter their desire, witches can't cross fire, no matter their desire..."

When my folks found me later, they said I was still reciting that nursery rhyme, like a ward against evil. Sometimes, I know, I say it in my sleep. I wake up from a dream that smells like ashes mixed with rain, and those words are in my throat, hanging round me in the heavy air.

At least everyone kept off me about prenticing and marrying after that day; Mama,

Pappa, they let me go my own way, and I took to keeping mostly to the Windle Wood. After a while, that got uncertain too, with the way people thereabouts looked at me, muttering dark words under their breath. They kept their children out of the woods I was sure, for I never saw any, much as I looked. So, taking the witch's wagon, I moved to one place and then another, until I found this wood, so like the Windle Wood I barely know the difference.

I built a little place here out of odds and ends, having found the shadows between the trees are cooling to my thoughts. I've got the witches' brood to take care of, and as much milk as I can pinch from the nearby dairy to keep them fed. Time was the milk no more made them men than that morning in the kitchen when I despaired of Brabus. But lately, just lately, it seems to have worked more magic—maybe I've finally found the right root to mix in with their sup. Yes, I'm certain I see them coming round, trying to get about on two legs instead of four, and pricking up their ears more keenly when I call them in at dusk.

— Kelly Sears Smith

### ***Galatea***

Always I have known these arms were made of dust.  
Cold, bloodless, they would not unbend themselves,  
any more than these stone lips could kiss.

Morning and night I stood at attention, straight and stiff  
as a sundial counting out the end of his days. My thoughts  
slipped through shadows. They were drafts that swept  
in between mountains, drifted into the corners of his studio,  
where they slept.

I never heard him weeping, never felt his tears or touches,  
not the thunderous crack of his chisel, or the soft caress of his polish.  
Awake, my back hurt and my feet ached. My skin was cold as marble.  
Who can blame me if I fled into the sunlight, thinking myself free?

Who can blame me, whose first sight was, in his studio's margins, all those  
cast-off heads and torsos of women nearly perfect as myself?

— Kelly Sears Smith